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ABSTRACT

This paper presents data on psychosocial stress and sources of social support in adolescence obtained from a longitudinal survey of a representative sample of 1,717 West German adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16. Structural changes in the life phase of adolescence are discussed and typical symptoms of psychosocial stress in adolescence are identified. Data on problem behaviors such as delinquency, aggression, drug abuse, and psychosomatic complaints are discussed as they relate to measures of the quality of adolescents' relationships with friends, parents, and teachers. The focus of this paper is on the effectiveness of teachers and other professionals (psychologists, social workers, career counselors, ministers) in helping adolescents deal with problems. Among the sources of stress identified in the paper are discrepancies between adolescents' school performance and their parents' expectations and the adolescents' feelings of inadequacy in keeping up with their peers. Potential preventive and remedial interventions are considered, including preventive youth and family policies, teachers as counselors, peer counseling, and the introduction of professional counselors into schools. (NB)

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Parents, Peers, Teachers and Other Significant Partners in Adolescence

Paper presented at the meetings of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Alexandria
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Abstract

This paper presents data from an ongoing study on psychosocial stress and sources of social support in adolescence. It is a longitudinal survey of a representative sample of 1.717 13-16 year olds supplemented by detailed case studies. Data on problem behavior such as delinquency, aggression, drug abuse, and psychosomatic complaints are related to measures of the quality of adolescents' relationships with friends, parents, and teachers. The focus of this paper is on the effectiveness of teachers and other professionals (psychologists, social workers, career counselors, ministers) in helping adolescents deal with problems. Among the sources of stress identified are discrepancies between adolescents' school performance and their parents' expectations and their feelings of inadequacy in "keeping up" with their peers. Potential preventive and remedial interventions are considered, including preventive youth and family policies, teachers as counselors, peer counseling and the introduction of professional counselors into schools.

1. Structural Changes in the Life Phase of Adolescence

The life phase of adolescence is in a state of rapid and radical change. Because of economical, social, and cultural processes, the living conditions and the starting-positions for the transition to the social status of adulthood have changed fundamentally within one century, i.e., in a period of time of only three to four generations. This has affected the relative importance of family, peer group, school and other socialization institutions in adolescence as well as their interrelations and connections.

Let us take a closer look at changes among the most important socialization agencies in adolescence (school, family, and peer group):

School: In all industrial countries the time for the adolescents' entrance into vocation has shifted to higher age-groups. In most countries the attendance of schools until the age of 16 or (for example in West Germany) even 18 is enforced by law since the 1970's. Thus the majority of the age-groups below 20 attend full-time schools and subsequent vocational preparatory training colleges. Full-time attendance of general educational and/or vocational training institutions has become the dominating structural characteristic of the life phase of adolescence.

Schooling in West Germany is compulsory from ages 6 to 18. Students must attend school full-time for 9 years (10 in some states) and then at least part-time for 2-3 years. At age 10, students must decide what type of secondary school to attend. Results of an examination administered to all children are an important determining factor. School choice is often based on the social status of the parents, causing many social differences to be maintained and perpetuated through the education system. The four school choices are:

1. Junior high/vocational preparatory school (Hauptschule), chosen by 37% of the students, completes the compulsory education and prepares students for occupations.
2. Intermediate school (Realschule), chosen by 25%, provides a middle level education and the basis for higher-level training in non-academic occupations.
3. Grammar school (Gymnasium), chosen by 30%, is required for admittance into university.
4. Comprehensive school (Gesamtschule), chosen by 5%, is available only in some areas.

Some 3% of each age group are in special schools for handicapped children.

The percentage of junior high and intermediate school leavers who go on to senior technical schools (Berufsfachschule, Berufsaufbauschule,Fachoberschule etc.) for one to three years of study is rising. Senior technical schools are the most popular full-time vocational schools. Altogether, some 50% of the leavers take this route. The other 50% directly go on to vocational training in the 'dual system'. Under this system they sign on with a firm and are trained in accordance with vocational orders applying to a particular trade. They learn on-the-job four days a week and spend one day a week at vocational school (Berufsschule). The classroom time is divided into one-third general studies and two-thirds trade-oriented studies running from two to three and a half years. Students must take a state-approved exam upon completion of their apprenticeships at the age of about 18 years. Students in grammar school have to make their final exam (Abitur) at about the age of 18-19 years.

Higher education in West Germany has grown tremendously in recent years. Between 1970 and 1985 over 250.000 new college places were created. In 1969, there were 79.400 freshmen enrolled contrasted with 210.000 in 1986. The abolition of student fees and the provision of government grants have made the acquisition of a college education a goal for many young people who, in the past, would not have thought it possible. In the early 1950's only 6% of each age group attended institutions of higher learning, now 22% do. While in the past an admittance requirement was a grammar school diploma, now the policy is more liberal. Potential students who did not study in a grammar school or who are already employed can take an aptitude test to determine eligibility for admittance. The average length of study at universities and comprehensive universities is 6.5 years, while at polytechnical schools it is 3.8 years (Bundesminister für Bildung und Wissenschaft 1987). Since young men have to serve almost 2 years in the army or in obligatory civil service, the average age of completing a university education for them is at about 27, for young women 25.

What does this mean for the adolescents' daily living conditions?

The gainful employment of the under 20-year-olds (and increasingly now also the under 25-year-olds) is no longer a characteristic sign of the phase of adolescence. The transition to the employment sector and thus to an important partial role of adulthood has shifted for the great majority of adolescents to the third decade of life. Gainful employment, which until the beginning of this century was typical for the phase of adolescence, has been replaced by scholastic learning or systematic training off-the-job. The experience of being immediately useful for society, of behaving according to the economic norms of effective rationality, and of being responsible for the personal material livelihood can only take place relatively late in life. School does provide many intellectual and social stimmulations, but it is an area which

allows for only marginal experiences of responsibility or solidarity and instead, encourages a strong individualistic moral of competition and favors mainly abstract and theoretical learning.

The fact of not being forced to work within the employment sector offers many individually disposable possibilities concerning time, selection of communication forms and partners, and arranging everyday life, particularly in the world of media and consumption. Nevertheless, it obviously can not be seen as a pledge of "becoming adult". As long as young people attend full-time schools, technical schools, polytechnical schools or universities, they are not seen as being "really" adult, despite whatever age they are.

Family: The situation of the family as a central institution for the adolescents' upbringing has changed considerably because of fast economical, social, and cultural changes. Today, families are relatively small units of only a few members: more and more they are households of one or two persons. They have become social systems that are highly susceptible to disturbance, mainly because of increasing temporal instability of the matrimony which is the social heart of the family's relationships. In our survey, about 15-20% of the questioned adolescents are affected by parental parting or divorce.

Family relationships are still the adolescents' emotional and social "home port". At the same time, it is one of the developmental tasks at the age of adolescence to become detached emotionally, socially, and economically, from just this "home port". Today this process of becoming detached is structurally very complex : Because of a long lasting economical dependence upon parents, evoked by extended scholastic and vocational education, it takes place later in life than a generation ago. On the other side, adolescents of today develop a life style which is independent from their parents very early , especially within the area of leisure time and consumption. They intend to move earlier into communities with peers or partners of the other sex. As the process of becoming detached takes place in the different areas at different times, the relations with the family of origin are complicated. The family's meaning as an economical support and also as an institution the adolescents relate to when career decisions occur is very high, whereas its role as social institution forming a life-style at the age of adolescence is small.

Peer Group: Comparative historical studies in West Germany show that at the stage of adolescence the meaning of the peer group as a significant social reference group has increased. Allerbeck and Hoag (1985) could show how the status of peer relations has become

bigger over the past twenty years. Obviously, the status of the peer group increases as much as the adolescents' social detachment from the parents takes place. In this difficult time of becoming detached the peer group can take over the functions of stabilizing the adolescent psychologically until a new modus of relations between parents and adolescents has been found.

Obviously, the peer group's influence concerning the organization of consumption and leisure time activities at the age of adolescence is of outstanding importance. The peer groups give the standards for the orientation in the field of consumption and, while doing so, very often place effective standards for the adolescents' behavior. Parts of them sometimes create their own youth culture, which makes the development of a personal, independent life-style possible. Peer groups offer equal participation chances to their members, which family or school do not give to them to the same extent. Peer groups are an important medium in order to enable adolescents to experience self-determination (Baacke, 1983; Oswald, Krappmann, Chowdhuri, & Salisch, 1984).

The adolescents' average financial resources at their disposal are comfortable today: The majority of adolescents live in material wealth. They are able to realize many of their wishes on the consumption and leisure field, of which their parents would not have thought of and could never have realized. As commercial marketing departments have realized since many years, there is a distinctive accumulation of purchasing power in adolescence.

Adolescents of today live a life of their own ideas within the area of friends, partners, media, and consumption. But they do so on an economic basis, which is not founded by themselves and not based on their own active gainful employment. This social position allows for a wide spectrum of personal development, offers a high grade of autonomy, spontaneity, creativity, and individuality. The leeway toward decisions, alternatives, and individual shaping of everyday life is enjoyed by most adolescents in a highly imaginative manner. In West Germany, we have many different reports which show a self-confident way of organizing life beyond the adults' paths when dealing with fashion and clothing oneself, taste in music, and leisure-time activities, language usage, and political articulation (Zinnecker, 1987). Adolescents obviously are able to develop forms of aquiring and assimilating social reality, which convey them many facets of sensorial, aesthetic, emotional, interactive, and communicative impressions.

However, we have to be aware that adolescents develop their spontaneity and individuality in a social context that is insecure, unstable, and hardly accountable. The social position "being adolescent" is always temporary, and never concrete and forever sure. Neither parents, nor teachers, apprenticeship trainers or friends can reassure the adolescents that chances of individualization also become real chances of opportunity. The occupational future is hardly calculable for adolescents. There do not exist reliable future perspectives of realizing life plans.

2. Typical Symptoms of Psychosocial Stress in Adolescence

What are the connections between the structural changes of the life phase of adolescence and the increase of health complaints, behavioral disorders and social deviance in adolescence ? As empirical investigations again and again signalize, in all industrial countries the number of adolescents is increasing who have problems with their scholastic achievement and report disturbances in learning and concentration (Hurrelmann, 1981, 1984). Teachers report increasing nervousness and hyperactivity and a drop in performance. Medical and psychiatric investigations point to increasing mental and psychological disorders among adolescents (Advisory Committee on Child Development, 1976; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Petri, 1979; Petersen & Craighead, 1986). Substance use is on a very high level (Bachman, Johnston & O'Malley 1978). A special type of alarm signal is a high death quota because of suicide, which is, at the age of adolescence, clearly above average in comparison to the total population (Diekstra & Hawton 1987). The prevalence of antisocial, delinquent, and criminal behavior is very high (Siddique & D'Arcey 1980; Rutter, 1980; Hamilton, 1988).

Our survey study in West Germany supports these results. The empirical investigation consists of two approaches:

1. A survey of 1.717 students aged 13 to 17, using a standardized questinnaire. The survey started in the fall of 1986 with the collection of data from seventh-grade and ninth-grade-pupils from all four school types of secondary education in the federal state of North-Rhine-Westphalia. As the survey is a panel design, these two cohorts are being reinterviewed at one-year intervals until they complete secondary school. The sample includes three regions: an urban agglomaration area, a middle-sized urban area, and a rural area. The schools and classes in the three regions under study were selected at random. Main independent variables included were SES, education of parents, scholastic records, and social network integration.

2. Longitudinal case studies of 40 students aged 14 at the first wave of three panels over a period of eight years. The inquiry consisted of slightly structured interviews each lasting about an hour. Altogether, we analysed 120 transcripts from three panel waves.

As dependent variables in the survey study, we introduced

a) Drug- and crime-related outcomes: The drug-use variable is an index combining self-raitings of alcohol, tabacco, and illegal drug use. The delinquent-activities variable is an index combining ratings of self-involvement with various illegal activities.

b) Psychosomatic disorders and health complaints: We used a general symptoms checklist based on symptoms such as headache, nervousness and restlessness, stomach pains, feeling of dizziness, lack of concentration, etc.

We correlated the scores on the symptoms checklist with two additional variables of our study: First, with the frequency score for "specific diseases". We found that there was significant correlation between syndromes such as circulatory disorder, heart trouble, digestive trouble, allergy and asthma and the individual scores for psychosomatic symptoms. Second, with the information adolescents gave on their consumption of medicines during the previous months. Significant correlations could be shown, for example, between the symptoms such as headache and the use of headache tablets (r=.45), sleep disturbances and sleeping pills or sedatives, or dizziness and cardiac remedies/circulatory preparations (r=.27).

Of the items on the checklist, headaches and nervousness/restlessness were reported most frequently (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage frequency of psychosomatic disorders (N=1717)

Symptoms	Occurence "often"	"sometimes"	"seldom/never"
headaches	20%	28%	52%
nervousness/restlessness	16%	25%	59%
dizziness	12%	18%	70%
lack of concentration	9%	27%	64%
stomach pains	9%	21%	70%
sleeplessness/ disturbed sleep	9%	16%	75%

From the survey and the case study, we are able to gain some actual informations on psychosocial stress and symptoms of strain in adolescence (Hurrelmann 1987; Hurrelmann, Engel, & Weidman 1988). In order to count on reports made by the adolescents themselves we asked them what they thought of as their "biggest problem". At the top of the list are the scholastic achievement problems. Thus, the phase of adolescence is clearly dominated by scholastic learning and its various demands. The second position is taken by the item "money", which points to the significance of material resources in the everyday life of adolescents. The precarious position of "money" at the age of adolescense becomes obvious - mostly, as shown by our analyses, in comparing or competition situations within the peer group. Already among adolescents material wealth supports jealous comparisons and, seen from this angle, is a serious "source" for psychosocial stress. Other self reported sources of stress are conflicts with parents and finding a boy/girl friend (table 2).

Table 2: Problems announced by 13- to 16-year-olds adolescents("Here are some problems adolescents can have. Is for you personally ...")

	A big problem %	A small problem %	No problem %	
Scholastic performance	24	58	18	100%
Money	14	41	44	100%
Conflicts with parents	12	39	49	100%
Finding a boy/girl friend	12	31	57	100%
Your appearance	7	39	54	100%
To see the meaning of life	7	27	66	100%
Health	5	35	60	100%
Leisure time	5	34	61	100%
Drugs/alcoholic drinks	4	5	91	100%

Other main results of our study are as follows (see Engel, 1987; Hurrelmann, Engel, & Weidman, 1988; Hurrelmann, Engel, Holler, & Nordlohne 1988, for more details):

1. The frequency of substance use, delinquent behavior, and health impairment increases when adolescents are in difficult scholastic achievement situations and are confronted by a high degree of parental expectations. As shown by our survey and case studies,

adolescents are aware of the fact that their position in the educational career is decisive for later chances in life but, simultaneously, can not guarantee success. In this case, psychosocial and psychosomatic stress is unavoidable. Failure at school - already experienced or anticipated - accompanies a considerable rise in health complaints, drug consumption and delinquent behavior. The parental pressure of having to cope successfully with the scholastic demands put upon the children is very strong: Only 10% of the parents in our survey would be satisfied with a vocational preparatory school certificate , nine tenths expect at least an intermediate or a grammar school certificate.

To give an example: In the group with failure in school the scores for an above-average frequency of psychosomatic disorders are significantly higher than in the group without failure in school. Obviously, a successful scholastic biography plays an important role in adolescents' well-being: If the school record is not successful, it can be a source of psychosocial stress and lead to the manifestation of stress symptoms. Students exposed to the risk of having to repeat a grade or to transfer to a lower school type due to poor performance and, as a consequence, the risk of not attaining a school-leaving certificate in line with their parents' and their own aspirations and plans, undergo highly stressful experience. Obviously, the risk of occupational and social downward mobility in the future is responsible for the "costs" manifested in a high percentage of an above-average number of health problems reported.

2. The frequency of substance use, delinquent behavior, and health impairment increases when adolescents experience a bad social climate in their family. Psychosocial stress is especially high if emotional conflict with parents coincides with social conflict on long-term perspectives for building up an individual life-style and planning an occupational career. The same is true for delinquent behavior and drug consumption: These symptoms are concomitant phenomena of problematic relations with parents, which points to a difficult and unsuccessful phase of separating from the nuclear family.

During adolescence it is especially the family that plays an important role in influencing occupational choices. Parents' assessment of academic achievement in relation to its career impact is one of their major functions. Our study shows that the social and emotional climate of family relationships is adversely affected by poor school performance; at the same time, the atmosphere at home is a mediating factor vis-a-vis problems that may result from school failure. Against the background of increased competition in the labor market in recent years, the interconnections between scholastic failure and the quality of family relations revealed here have become progressively more significant, and will

continue to do so, thus constituting a source of considerable tension that might interfere with satisfactory relations between adolescents and parents.

3. The frequency of substance use, delinquent behavior and health disorders increases when adolescents face a difficult integration processes into the peer group. If they do not succeed in being accepted by their significant peers and retaining an unchallengeable social position as a member of the peer group, if they suffer from little popularity and little acceptance within the peer group, this leads to a considerable uncertainty of social orientations and self-esteem and may result in symptoms of psychosocial stress. The impression of not being able to "keep up" with the peers according to social or - very important - material standards, is especially connected with a high frequency of delinquent behavior. Drug abuse has to be seen as a social means for achieving acceptance among the peer group.

These results supports empirical evidence from other studies adapting a "social network approach": For example, Blyth and his colleagues invited several thousand 7th to 10th graders to identify the significant people in their lives. According to these studies, family members - and especially parents - are relatively important to young people in this age group. While respondents in the studies gave increasing salience to peer friends with increased age, at no point did peers overtake parents as the most significant people in the lives of these teenagers. Blyth and his colleagues have examined the possible links between network characteristics and drug use (Blyth, Hill, & Thiel, 1982; Blyth, Durant, & Moosbrugger 1985). They found that drug useres had less intimate relationships with their parents and were much more oriented to older youth than were those adolescents not involved with drugs. Similar results are reported by Kandel and her colleagues (Kandel et al., 1978).

Cochran and Bo conducted a similar study in Norway. The sample consists of 92 16 year old boys attending the 9th grade classes in two schools. In the network interview the boys were asked to identify people who had significance for them, whose name they knew, they did something with, and with whom they were in regular contact. Examples given included friends of the family, relatives, friends from school and other settings, neighbors, teachers and club leaders. Additionally, they included a socioeconomic status measure and a neighborhood milieu measure by identifying 18 residential areas in the parts of Stavanger served by the two study schools, asking experts to rate each residential area on a five point scale according to their general perceptions of the areas as having more or fewer problems.

As the results show, criminal activity and alcohol use as well as school-reported truancy increase as time reported spent with peers increases. As time spent with parents increase, there is a decrease in amount of criminal and alcohol-related activity reported. Additionally, positive behaviors and performance as reported by the teacher and the school increase with increases in time spent with parents and especially with reports of more unrelated adults in the network. Apparently, such ties with people outside the kinship system bring new information to the person anchoring the network, and provide feedback in response to initiatives by that person. There are strong indications in this study that socioeconomic and neighborhood factors combine in different ways with family and network processes and seem to be central to maintaining low levels of antisocial behavior. At least as powerful as parent contracts in predicting anti-social behavior was the type of neighborhood milieu resided in by the boys. Apparently, the boys in the higher risk neighborhoods were more likely to "hang out" in groups, and less apt to belong to clubs and organizations (Cochran, & Bo, 1987).

3. Implications for Social Support Strategies

We believe that the findings generated by these studies underscore the value of taking a broad ecological and socialization approach to understanding the development and behavior of adolescents and the genesis of delinquency, substance use, and health complaints (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). One of the key implications of the studies involves the importance of interactions with parents, peers, teachers, and other significant partners for the prevention of involvement in anti-social behavior by adolescents. The findings reported suggest strongly that the maintenance of frequent, constructive interactions with significant others, including the parents and other significant adults, is very important not only in childhood but in adolescence as well (Cochran, & Bo, 1987; Darling, 1987).

From all reports, it becomes obvious that measures to improve adolescents' personal well-being, action competences, and self-esteem, and measures for improving the material and ecological living conditions and the social network integration are of evident significance for the whole process of successful or unsuccessful socialization (Hurrelmann, Kaufmann, & Lösel, 1987; Hurrelmann, 1988). The most effective intervention measures in this respect are preventive measures in education, family, youth, health, and social policies. It can be proved that these prophylactic investigations are most reasonable for every society, as those costs arising from later treatment, remediation, therapy, or control, which develop out of reinforced disorders and interferences, such as drug-abuse, juvenile delinquency, disability to learn and to work are a lot higher.

What does this mean for the most important areas of socialization that I have mentioned in the first part of this paper?

1. Regarding the family area we can state: The more stable and dependable the relationships between parents and children are before entering the phase of adolescence, the better are the starting positions for the further personality development at the age of adolescence. It has to be the aim of all policies concerned with families to guarantee a minimum amount of economical safety and cultural inspiration among the families, as they are the basis for later satisfactory relationships between parents and adolescents. Facing the erosion of the family as an educational authority at the stage of adolescence, this task becomes more and more difficult. Parents get into the precarious situation of forcing their childrens' scholastic and vocational career, pushing them into individual competition, but without being able to offer them an acceptable life perspective based on these efforts.

2. Regarding the peer group, we can state that there has to be room for the adolescents' personal experiences in order to protect them from commercial temptations, as well as from abnormal or dangerous adventurous experiences with deviant peer groups. The big dilemma is the fact that adolescents have a lot of freedom within the social and financial area but are without a real challenge and satisfaction of their needs and interests: The mass media offer only a superficial fullfilment and a pretence of adventure and experience to them. There is a lack of "serious" challenges and personal challenges which would allow for trying out personal physical power, psychological and social competences, by which the personal possibilities and limitations of behavior may be tested. There is hardly any freedom which makes it possible to go against "law and order" in a tentative manner without the immediate intervention of police or control brigades. Our highly civilized and rationalized society has largely filled and leveled out such opportunities. There will be nothing else left to do but reactivate these opportunities "artificially" by creating new activities among sports clubs, scouts groups, travel groups, social work groups, by taking into account the problem that adolescents of today only start using these institutionalized offers in a very hesitant way.

3. A key-role is taken by the occupational sector . Even in our so-called "leisure-time society" this sector constitutes the main area for defining self and prestige. Our society pushes adolescents into enormous difficulties by not giving them a guarantee of later gainful employment, after they have successfully finished school. By doing so, the society destroys an essential minimal calculability of future, on which adolescents at their specific life phase are physically dependent. Taking up an occupation - besides getting married

and establishing an own family - has since decades been the decisive symbolic step toward adulthood. If this is not garanteed, our societies take away the adolescents' social basis for "becoming adult".

4. However important the preventive measures are, we of course also have to help those who are already in difficulties. As emphazised above, any form of psychosocial and psychosomatic health impairment and anti-social behavior has to be interpreted as an individual way of coping with life stress in adolescence. Therefore, intervention measures have directly to take into account the psychosocial functions which drug abuse, delinquent behavior, and the building up of psychosomatic symptoms possess for adolescents. It is not useful to develop highly specialized "intervention technologies". We can only provide support and help that is politically, psychological, pedagogically, and socially effective, if we consider the whole life situation of adolescence. Building up measures, such as advisory service, treatment, and therapy on the single symtoms within the psychosocial and psychosomatic area is - as I have emphasized - necessary, but we must not spend all our energy on this "curing of symptoms". We have to concentrate on the real starting positions for the appearance of the symptoms, which have a complex structural embedding. Facing the many facets of this problem we need a combination and coordination of the activities done in family and youth work, youth advisory services, public health departments, hospitals, welfare offices, employment agencies, combined with the set up of accessible institutions to which parents and adolescents can turn to for advice in their neighborhood.

5. <u>The Role of Schools and Teachers in the Social Support Networks of Adolescents</u>

What can the specific role of schools be in this endeaver? The school is, as has been mentioned, strongly affected by the structural changes of the life phase of adolescence. As a necessary consequence of this fact the position of school in the adolescents' everyday life has to be rethought.

School is a major source of stress in adolescents' lives. It is also potentiall y a major source of support. West German schools are significantly different from those in the United States as sources of both stress and support. Rather than attending neighborhood schools with their childhood friends, adolescents attend different secondary schools depending upon their academic ability and their career plans. School sessions end at noon or soon after. Schools offer few if any extra-curricular activities and little guidance counseling. Therefore, West

German schools are less likely to provide social support either from peers or from professionals. While this may have been acceptable when only the elite attended school full-time after the age of 14, extended secondary schooling has become the rule, and schools must find ways of assisting adolescents experiencing problems that interfere with their academic performance.

It is my opinion that the school's potential for social support should be strengthened. If school, besides being an institution providing knowledge and intellectual training, also becomes a social platform, an encouraging part of the adolescents' everyday life, than it is open for important experiences for the personal development in many dimensions. A "good school" in this sense is a society's unsurepassable contribution on youth politics. The school has to offer working and training opportunities with different learning situations for adolescents which for them are meaningful and important. A good school with a pleasant climate can be a social area with preventive effect for anti-social behavior and health impairments.

At school, for many hours social communication among students and between students and teachers takes place. School's potential for social support has to be carefully analyzed. It is helpfull to imagine school as one social institution among others of the whole everyday network of adolescents. School as a social institution dominates a large sector of the adolescents' social world and forms an main sector of the life course. For this reason, the school is one of the most important institutions being responsible for the competent and healthy development of adolescents. Like hardly any other institution, because of the fact that adolescents are obliged to attend school for many years, school gets in contact with practically all members of an age cohort and therefore is principally an ideal place for supportive measures.

Consequently, we have to put forward the demand that schools,

a) within their setting, do provide learning and working conditions that do not produce behavior disorders, substance use and psychosomatic complaints, and

b) do pay attention to the fact that an increasing number of adolescents are exposed to high non-scholastic stress and therefore need social support, including support within the school setting.

The decisive potential for social support arises from the social relationships of the acting persons within the school setting, among the students on one hand, and between students and teachers on the other hand. What are the supportive potentials of these social relations? They can be understood as the provision of resources for coping with critical situations, enduring strain, and difficult transitions. We can differentiate between various dimensions upon which social support is given (Gottlieb, 1981):

- emotional support: showing appreciation and sympathy
- instrumental support: showing practical, active helping behavior,
- informational support: providing knowledge and skills,
- evaluative support: giving offers for estimating and solving situations,
- material support: giving financial resources.

The social support is apt to

- reduce the propability for the occurence of stressful situations, because a good social embedding in a social network proves to have a sheltering effect;
- help when trying to cope actively with an already existing stressful situation because social and instrumental help is available for the overcoming of critical situations;
- makes it easier to deal with already manifest symptoms of antisocial behavior and health impairments, because it proves to strengthen the individual capacities of resistence.

From our survey study, we are able to assess what status adolescents attribute to the school within their social network. We asked the adolescents who in their opinion are the persons able to support them in problem situations. The students were given a hypothetical problem situation that was supposed to be quite realistic and close to their everyday experience. At the same time, a checklist was submitted to them consisting of potential persons and representatives of their social network. The adolescents reported their estimation, how sure or unsure it is that they would consult the above mentioned groups or persons in case they face a problem situation.

The two hypothetical situations were constructed so that the first refered to a personal problem, the second to a scholastic problem (see Table 3). The results clearly show that the mother is the most frequently named person the adolescents relate to, followed by a girl/boy friend, and the father. The rank order remains nearly unchanged between the two situations. There is, however, a noticeable difference concerning the classroom teacher who is mentioned considerably more often in connection with scholastic problems than with private problems. The results show a significant predomination of orientations on informal groups

(parents, friends, relatives) while institutionalized roles of lay and professional helpers are valued significantly more reserved. Concerning the scholastic problem situation, of all institutionalized roles the adolescents relate to, the classroom teacher receives the highest confidence in being able to provide help. The classroom teacher is placed above the liaision teacher and the advisory teacher.

Table 3: Orientations on Support of 13- to 16-year-old Adolescents in Their Social Network

Question: "Imagine yourself to be in the following situation:

1st situation: You, as a boy or a girl, have got a very personal problem and would like to really talk it out.

2nd. situation: At school you are often tired and can not concentrate. You have had problems following the lessons for quite a time. You want to know what is the matter with yourself.

To whom do you turn?
Please make a cross in each line:
You think it is ... 5= very sure, 4= quite sure, 3= not sure/doubtful, 2= quite doubtful, 1= not at all possible that you will turn to this person or this institution".

Persons to relate to	Average number of points	
	1st situation	2nd situation
Your mother	3,9	4,0
Your father	3,2	3,4
One of your siblings	2,8	2,7
Grandfather/grandmother	2,3	2,2
Aunt/uncle	2,1	2,0
Cousins	2,2	2,0
Your classroom teacher	1,9	2,6
Liaison teacher	2,0	2,1
Advisory teacher	1,8	1,8
A neighbor	1,6	1,5
A girl friend	3,6	3,4
A boy friend	3,3	3,1
A social worker	1,6	1,5
A psychologist	1,6	1,5
A minister	1,7	1,6
A doctor	1,9	2,1

In Table 4, the persons of the social network listed in table 3 are combined to five contexts. The five contexts were checked by using the factors analysis. By doing so we found that it was not possible to assigne relatives and siblings clearly to one context, that is why we took them out of Table 4.

Table 4: Orientations on social support of 13- to 16-year-old adolescents according to contexts adolescents refer to (derived from table 3)

Contexts to relate to	Average number of points 1st situation	2nd situation
Parents	3,5	3,8
Friends	3,4	3,3
Relatives	2,2	2,1
Teachers	1,9	2,2
Helpers	1,7	1,7

Table 4 shows very clear, how adolescents value support of teachers in comparison to other contexts they relate to: Teachers range, according to the esteem of their supportiveness nearly on the same level as relatives. They range higher than the professional helpers (social workers, psychologists, psychologists, ministers, doctors) of the non-scholastic area. Taking this into account teachers are important supportive partners at least on scholastic questions or on questions somehow connected to school. However, the barriers for accepting "personal" advice are higher than the barriers for accepting "scholastic" advice.

As can not be reported in detail here, our analyses show that teachers are named as potential social supportes mainly by those students, who at the same time mention parents and relatives to a high degree. Teachers are not mentioned extesively by those students who mainly turn to friends (peers) in the case that they face problems.

Finally, we asked the adolescents, whether they really had turned to the different persons and groups mentioned with private or scholastic problems. The answers are in Table 5. They confirm the results from tables 3 and 4, and again point to the fact that there are starting points for using the supportive potentials offered by the school: Adolescents turn significantly more often to teachers than to other professional helpers. Among all the "official representatives of society" who are of any meaning for the adolescents, teachers prove to be the persons who are most approachable and open to if it is asked for help. Of course, the school can by no means compete with the informal groups adolescents relate to such as the

family, friends, and relatives. But in comparison to other organized institutions in the world of adolescents the school can be identified as a potential and actual place for social support when adolescents are facing scholastic or personal problems. Teachers definitely are significant reference persons and social partners for adolescents.

Table 5: Have you really within the last 3 months turned to somebody to talk a most personal/scholastic problem out? Answers "Yes, I turned to..."

	with a personal problem	with a scholastic problem
Mother	72%	75%
Father	42%	44%
Girl friend	56%	46%
Boy friend	38%	33%
Grandfather/mother	14%	10%
Aunt/uncle	8%	7%
Cousins	10%	8%
Classroom teacher	6%	16%
Liaison teacher	3%	5%
Advisory teacher	1%	1%
Social worker	1%	2%
Minister	3%	2%
Doctor	4%	6%
Psychologist	1%	1%

6. Approaches to Strengthen the Supportive Potentials of Schools

What are the measures that could prove to be successful in order to try to activate and strenghten the supporting potentials the teachers and the school setting? The general conclusions from our own study and other studies in their field is clear. Hamilton has summed up the necessary recommendations:

"To make secondary schools more benficial influences on adolescent development, we need to expand the variety of roles, relations, and activities adolescents engage in and to create opportunities for adolescents to interact with people of a wider range of ages and cultural backgrounds. Th is entails opening up the schools to the larger community and the developmental experience it can provide; increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of academic instruction through fuller use of current and emerging instructional technology; give more attention to the carryover of school learning to other settings; and enlisting the support of the home, community, peer group, and workplace for the developmental functions of schools" (Hamilton, 1984, 254).

a) Experiential Learning

These proposals are particularly important for the West German school system: In addition to imparting and enriching academic learning in school, educators must realize that adolescents in an extended school system need more opportunities and new forms of experiential learning in the community. This can be achieved by exposing adolescents in school to a greater diversity of people in different social and occupational settings. By doing this, schools can start to deal with the fact that their academic program is viewed by adolescents as being instrumental, artificial, and arbitrary as our case studies have shown (Hurrelmann, 1987). Adolescents need to see more ecidence that they can use what they have learned in school in other social settings outside, and, at the same time, that they can introduce the experience they have gained outside into the school's learning program. Therefore, stronger efforts should be made to relate the content of instruction more closely to the demands of life outside schools.

This can only be done through cooperation between the school and the key settings outside (parents, community, workplace). Particular importance should be placed on the building of links between the school and the workplace. Concrete examples of this are discussed by Persell (1977, 171) and by Hamilton and Crouter (1980). This involves programs within the school system that are related to the student's everyday experiences. Programs are, as mentioned above, directed toward meeting students' needs in terms of introducing everyday experiences into the contents of the specific curricula and the extracurricular activities, including informal activities related to personal problems as encountered by adolescents.

b)Social Support Provided by Classroom Teachers

As the empirical results of chapter 3 demonstrate, the classroom (term) teacher (form master) is evaluated as a person providing potential support mainly in the case of scholastic problems. Accordingly, all thinkable efforts should be made in order to let classroom teachers, above their teaching, become a personal partner adolescents turn to and let this activity become part of education, understood as an all-embracing educating task of school. A main condition for the fulfilment of the term teachers' supportive function is that they are well-informed about the students' life-situation outside the scholastic area (family, peer group, youth clubs), as well as inside the schools' area, concerning achievement levels, scholastic records, and group dynamics processes within the classroom. If teachers are capable of recognizing problems and deficits in this area, they can by influencing group processes in class, or by direct social contact, have a lasting influence on one students' social relations to the others.

In the field of teaching methods it is specially important for teachers to take into account the students' individual achievement capabilities by ability grouping cooperative teaching.

c) Counseling at school

This addresses problems of school careers, learning problems and poor levels of achievement, failure at school, vocational guidance, and psychic or scoial problem behavior. Typical measures are individual counseling, group sessions or structured curricular programs. Programs of this type in Germany usually are introduced by on-the-job training for teachers. These teachers keep their role as educators in classroom and, in addition, become part-time counselors with about 10 to 20 percent of their working time. The advantage of this construction is the fact that students can expect help within the school setting and do not have to go to a non-scholastic authority. But this is also just the disadvantage, as the advisory function is carried out by a person who at the same is acting judgeging and selecting. The counseling teachers' specific possibilities therefore have to be carefully sounded out. Many points let it seem reasonable to restrict the definition of the counsling teachers' field of tasks to those which are connected to scholastic problems (learning problems, failure at school, future scholastic career plans, future occupational plans, vocational guidance, etc.), whereas personal problems should only be tackled in cooperation with psychological counselling services or other youth advisory services. It is specially important to appoint the teacher as an information and connecting place in order to keep contact with non-scholastic advisory services.

d) Fellow Students as Tutors

How can the friendship or peer group relations with their relatively high support potentials be activated in the area of school? The chances can be found especially where friendship and peer group relations arise from within-school contacts. According to our sample, in West Germany schools on the average 75% of all students choose their best friend from his/her class mates. Therefore, the potential peer group helper predominantly should come from the class. The higher the grade of cooperation and solidarity of students among a school class is, the higher are the possibilities for social support. How well developed the cooperation and solidarity is depends up to a high extent on the group dynamics sensibility of the term teacher. Those teachers, who are aware of the group can in an effectful manner activate the peer groups' potential for social support.

Thus, to introduce fellow students as tutors can be an important teaching principle: Class-mates take over the role of the teacher by supporting younger or less competent students during learning and training serious. This interaction is very effecient if it can take place more or less indepent of the teachers influence. The tutor - student relation is of reciprocal character: Not only are the addressees supported but, at the same time, the self-confidence and social competences of the tutors are is strengthened by their role as a helper.

A slightly different model is the sponsor student: This model deals with the fact that a longlasting, intense, tight relationship is established with a fellow student who is severely stressed and shows manifest symptoms of behavior or health disorders. In contradiction to the tutor students this does not mainly aim at supporting the achievement capability but the social development. This role is somewhat more difficult than the role of a tutor student because complicated problem situations are the starting situation for help. The sponsor student is supposed to help a class-mate to be able to overcome difficult transitions (change of school) and competences enabling him/her to manage difficult life events (serious illness, death of father/mother, etc.). The sponsor student is expected to have social and psychological capabilities, but above all, the willingness to take over part of the responsibility for the well-being of a class-mate.

e) Students' Self-Help Groups

Students' groups oriented on self-help can be understood as a spontaneuosly founded, artifical network, developed from the fact that these students themselves are affected. Normally, these groups refer to conflicts in the scholastic area which they have identified and defined as political problems. Self-help groups can be effective instruments in order to reduce their members' social isolation and lack of self-confidence and to cope with actual problem situations. Teachers and school principal should be interested in tolerating or even stimulating self-help groups that offer advice and help to each other when difficult achievement or social situations occur.

f) Work with Parents

As has been mentioned, today the adolescents' two main important socialization authorities, the family and the school, are in a precarious relationship to each other. It is the aim of the parents to supply their children the most suitable starting positions for their future educational career, avoid set-backs and guarantee their children the best starting postions for

their future occupational careers. It is the aim of the school to support and judge the achievement development of all children according to the same standards, to make a selection according to the rank of achievement, and to provide the adolescents with the intellectual and behavioral competence that is expected in the different societal fields.

It has to be the aim of concrete measures in order to foster the supportive potential of school, to identify the overlaps of the different areas of interest of the two educating institutions and then start at this point to develop cooperation lines. The schools' task to encourage students can for example, be very well fulfilled when acurate knowledge is at hand of the child's or adolescent's personal and familial conditions of development. Both institutions can reach their aims if successful support of the achievement development of the adolescents is realized. Simultaneously, a good cooperation may highten the acceptance of scholastic, even selective, measures. The acceptance grows when parents are regularly informed about their childrens' scholastic activities.

7. Concluding Remarks

In this article I put forward the question, if the social institution school is structurally and organizationally capable, parallel to its learning and teaching program, to offer also measures of social support to adolescents. A differentiated answer to this question is most urgently needed because the psychological and social problems of adolescents are very pronounced and in some parts have reached an alarming extent. The analysis has pointed out some starting points from which the schools' potentials for social support of adolescents could be mobilized and developed. I hope to have clearly said that the schools' possibilities must not be overestimated. The school itself is in an unavoidable manner a source of stress at the age of adolescence. At the same time it has to face its societal responsibility as a public educating system.

School has to be understood as an important part of the adolescents' everyday world and has to offer adequate possibilities for experiences. All measures should be supported that increase the schools' potentials of teaching, education, and help develop a personality. By including social pedagogical knowledge in the schools' staff - also by measures offered by specially trained social workers - the supporting potential of the institution school has to be improved. Such initiatives are all the more effective if emphasize is put on integrating them into the curriculum and the more they are based on an uncomplicated cooperation of teachers and specially trained staff.

The consequences of the heavy emphasis on school during adolescence are ambiguous: On the one hand, the extension of school-time "deprives" adolescents of an important field of social experience. Later entry into employment prevents full material independence. Opportunities for earning money, for self-determination and for leading a life that is relatively independent of the family of origin are no doubt restricted because of the prevailing state of dependence. In many respects employment is a prerequisite for the acquisition of independence in other areas because it offers more than just a material basis in view of its substantial psychological and social implications for adolescents and their social environment. Both publicly and privately the phase of adolescence is mainly defined and interpreted as a process of transition into working life and the economic system.

On the other hand, the extension of school-time offers access to good educational opportunities and large measures of independence and autonomy in a number of action fields, such as leisure, entertainment, consumption, politics, informational and sexual relations, all of which enable adolescents to choose and try out new and individual paths leading toward optimal growth and social integration. It is the task of schools to offer help to adolescence in order to enable them to cope with this situation.

Pedagogical, sociological, and psychological trained staff has to learn once more to deal with the paradoxon that adolescents of today have relatively better material living conditions, education, and developmental chances and often - at least it seems like that - a wider leeway for decisions at their command than the parental and adult generation, but at the same time, their psychosocial problems can be pronounced. Perhaps, we "adults" have the best understanding for this situation if we consider that some of the sources for irritation and stress at the age of adulthood do not differ a lot from those at the age of adolescence, and that because of this fact we have pronounced problems to be "adult" but the advantage (or is is a disadvantage?), not to be in the phase of building up our personality.

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